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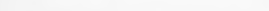
BY MRS. HENRY WOOD.

CHAPTER VII.

Cords should not have dragged me to t

the footman; "the check these fellows have!"

The fellow in question did not appear.



the case without difficulty; that she had been suddenly called from some scene of gaiety.

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delphia.

must either give up the chase, or make a doubtful effort in another course.

making, and dressed in a more responsible manner than marked the usual customers of the place.

"When I've asked your son a few questions, I shall be done with him," said Felix. "If he gives me the information I require, I will pay him well."

"Brush up your brains, Jimmy," said his affectionate father.

"All right, dad," and the small boy wrinkled his forehead and squinted violently by way of brushing up his brains.

"Can you write, Jimmy?" asked Felix.

"A wally good," said Jimmy.

"Excuse me for interrupting," said the paternal relative, who seemed unable to divert himself of the idea that Felix intended to bestow some unusual benefit on his hopeful son. "Excuse me, sir, but I was once in a lawyer's office in my young days. You may not know that if you want to make a will in his favor, he can't be a witness to it."

"I have no such intention," said Felix, turning away to hide a laugh. "Do you ever play in boats, Jimmy?"

"Often, don't I, dad?"

"Did you play in one on any day this week?"

"There's foolish questions," broke in dad.

"I have reasons for asking them. If you want to earn some money without much trouble, you'll let him answer all the questions I ask."

"Dad was silent."

"Do you remember playing in a boat painted white with a green stripe along the sides?"

"Look here, mister, the boy ain't going to answer to questions without you make it worth while. If you fork over an X, I might know something about that boat myself."

"If you can tell me what I want to know, I'll make it twice that," said Felix, eagerly.

Felix took out two ten-dollar notes, and placed them under a paperweight on the table.

"There's the money all ready," he said.

"Now, where was that boat?"

"A white gig with a green stripe?"

"Yes, and a name?"

"The Gloria wasn't it—painted on the stern?"

"Where did you see it?"

"At pier No. 1. It was there a day. I do jobs about the wharves, and I happened to be watching a lot of mules, and Jimmy here brought my dinner down that day. Youngsters like to dabble in the water, you know, sir, so I just lifted him into the boat, and set down to take my dinner in peace, when up comes a tall, brown-faced chap. He stood, and stared at me while I ate."

"Fine day," says he, at last.

"You'll know me again," says I.

"Do you see that steamer out there?" says he.

"Of course," says I. "It's the Gloria, Captain Darville, South America."

"Right," says he. "I suppose you wouldn't object to taking that boat out to the steamer to night for a consultation?"

"This was kinder suspicious like, but I wasn't none of my business, so says I. 'Hand over the consideration, and I'll do it now.'"

"Not now," says he, "to-night about twelve. Be here, and I'll come down. Keep steady, if you care for your own interest."

"So I kept steady, and at twelve the tall chap came, gave me a V, threw a note into the boat, and told me to take the boat out to the Gloria, which I did, trying it to my own bait and towing it out."

"Did you see the tall man when you returned?" asked Felix.

"Yes. He had been watching me, for he was just turning on his heel as I landed."

"Could you tell me what he was like?"

"I ain't much of a hand at that sort of thing. He was taller—much taller than you, sir—with a dark mustache, and dark, almost black eyes, very close together."

"Right!" muttered Felix. "Can you tell me anything more about him?"

"Not much. I was naturally curious about the chap, and as I had no pressing job on hand, I just kept steady, and followed him."

"Trumbull looked dubiously at the money on the table, and hesitated."

"Go on," cried Felix. "Go on!"

"Don't you think you might give a hand workman man another five for all this?"

"That depends whether all this is worthy of another five or not. If you can point out the place where this fellow went, I will have no objection to do so."

Felix had suddenly become cool, and the man determined to content himself with the extra five, instead of piling them on ad libitum.

"The tall chap walked a long distance through the smallest and darkest streets, and at last got into a street—er I followed him, for I've got a family to support, and the police is always offering rewards for suspicious individuals. I got out too, and kept on his track. He went into a house in Forty-seventh street. I waited, but he didn't come out."

"Would you know that house again?" asked Felix, endeavoring to conceal his excitement.

"Of course. There was a sign under the window. I struck a match and read it. It was, 'Madame Bourie, Clairvoyant.'"

"You will take me to that house at once?"

"All right, but Jimmy—"

"You can leave him here, and return for him. Every minute is valuable."

"I say, mister, why did you ask about his writin? He's a smart boy, and I shouldn't wonder if he's been in the papers as an infant prodigy. There's no knowing what time reporters is up to. You didn't hear about his writin in that way, did you?"

"No. He had scribbled his name in the bottom of the boat. That's the way I found you out," hurriedly answered Felix.

"Come on."

"It ain't possible! Good-bye, Jimmy. We'll be back soon."

"Is he going to dopt me, dad?"

"No," cried dad, as Felix pushed him into the hall, "but he might do worse."

"He's a fraud," screamed the small boy bursting into tears. "Get more money out of him, dad!"

"Dad chuckled and asked Felix if he didn't think Jimmy was a boy to be proud of."

The two were about half an hour in reaching Forty-seventh street.

Trumbull stopped before a gloomy looking, old-fashioned house. On the door was under one of the front windows was the name in faded gilt letters—

Madame Bourie, Clairvoyant.

Brownwood paid Trumbull, and took his address.

Making sure that his revolver was safe in his breast-pocket, he ascended the steps, and rang the bell.

(To be continued on next page.)

THREE TIMES.

BY MRS. S. R. TOWNSEND MAYER.

CHAPTER V.

"The bride song from high and low is still, the whole world is still, my love, my own for evermore!"

"I am sure I heard some one moving," said Alice.

"Only the wind, dear; we have been much too quiet to wake them. And you know they will be here soon."

"One o'clock—yes," said Florence.

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and her hand clasped in mine, Florence began to talk, so confidently and tenderly, of the happy life in store for her.

"It will be so delightful, Alice, to make some one else happy, to feel what I have never felt before, that I am necessary to some one else's happiness. I love Arthur, oh, so very dearly! And must he not love me very much, to plan all this rescue for me?—rescue from the grave, Alice, for I should have died of horror and despair in a very short time, if they had forced me to marry Mr. Malcolm! Do you think they will ever forgive me?"

"I hope so, darling."

"I must try to be a better wife than I have been daughter. But it will be so very difficult, Alice, to be so loving and devoted to a man who is so wicked, and I am so horribly frightened!"

"Begin by going to bed now, there's a dear child. You will not look fit to wear white lace and orange-blossoms in the morning if you sit up all night."

"Oh, wasn't it kind of Mrs. Gordon to get it all ready for me? And how thoughtful of Arthur to ask her to provide that cloak! Could you have imagined any one being so thoughtful?"

"At last I penetrated her to bed, leaving just a feeble glimmer of gas alight, and setting open the door of communication with my little apartment. I threw off my own dress as quickly as possible, half worn out by the excitement of the day, and had barely lost consciousness when it was fully recalled by a loud scream from Florence."

"I was by her side in a moment."

"My love, my dearest, control yourself. What is it?"

"That woman again! That Creole we saw at Mrs. Seymour's! There!—Alice, Alice, save me, I shall die!"

I looked in the direction of Florence's pointing finger, and saw, in truth, at first scarcely distinctly, but then more and more clearly, the figure of a woman in a white dress, standing by the door of the dressing-room, and looking back at us with a look of angry despair, on the wedding robes, and seemed to rend them, then dwindled, vanished, as swiftly and completely as before.

Florence was sobbing and shivering with terror.

"Alice," she murmured, faintly, "do you remember what day this is?"

"Wednesday."

"No, no—the day of the month."

"The twenty-first of December."

"Yes—the anniversary of the very day we saw it first—two years ago!"

This coincidence added to the appalling horror which had crept over me.

"And my wedding day!" cried Florence, in an almost shriek. "Of all days in the year, to come back to me to-day!"

"It must have been our fancy, dear," I said, trying to reassure Florence, by all sorts of conjectures in which I had no belief whatever myself. "We are both nervous and excited, and have conjured up a phantom out of the dress and veil in this light, and don't think any more of it."

"No, no—no!—besides, she tore my dress and veil. Didn't you notice? Come and see."

We hurried together to the wardrobe. There lay the dress, wreath, and veil, a few hours since so carefully arranged, in a crumpled heap on the floor.

"Some one must have done this," said Florence, in an almost shriek. "Oh, what can it be, what can it mean?"

"Perhaps some servant of Mrs. Gordon's, not knowing this room was occupied—"

"Oh, Alice, you know it was not a servant. Besides, the door is locked."

"Well, I cannot explain it," I said at last despairingly. "I only know that it will very soon be the case for you to dress. Pray lie down for a little while."

She obeyed, and closed her eyes, but I knew we neither of us slept again; and when Mrs. Gordon's maid tapped at the door we were already stirring.

CHAPTER VI.

"Never more!"

"White life!"

"Ned! I hope to see his face!"

"Once he has gone home!"

"But he will stay!"

"I hope so!"

"I hope so!"

It was a very pale, frightened, and serious bride who was presently adorned; and she did not mention the night's adventure to Mrs. Gordon, Florence once or twice confessed to me in the course of the morning that the awful vision haunted her, and made her even more depressed and anxious than was inevitable under the peculiar circumstances of her wedding.

Still she looked very lovely when the wreath crowned her long curls, and the veil flatted round her gentle face, but we had not much time to spend in admiration, and a large clock and shawl soon eclipsed the glories of her trailing silks.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Gordon started with us for the church, the large travelling trunk most unorthodox appendage—riding outside, as we were not to return to the ceremony.

Early though we arrived Arthur was there before us, and in the quiet of the cold winter morning Mr. Gordon gave Florence to him, while I confess to losing much of the solemnity of the service by peering scrutinizingly into the dim distant aisles, in fear lest some uninvited guest might yet forbid the union.

Nothing so trivial occurred, however. The ceremony was concluded, Mrs. Gordon had resumed possession of her sacred fire, and the bride and bridegroom were receiving congratulations, good wishes and adieu, long I suspect, before Mr. and Mrs. Cope who were not accustomed to see Florence very early in the morning had discovered our flight.

When Mrs. Gordon and I parted, she had recovered her color and her smiles; and while my family were still discussing the early lunch, I scattered their serenity to the winds by walking into the oak parlor at Hillside.

I will not attempt to detail the hubbub of questions and comments which my entrance excited. I saw then that it had come according to the manner of this world. Mr. Balfour could scarcely believe it at first, he had felt so certain that, being the only child, they would forgive me when it was no longer of any use to be angry."

Mr. Balfour! She had not once called him Arthur, though that name had been so sweet to her, when we were last together.

"It is quite well, Florence," I said. "Yes, thanks. He is shouting with some friends, and will probably dine at home this evening. And that reminds me that I ought not to keep you talking here so long. You will be glad to change your dress."

The interior of the house, as we passed through it, exactly corresponded with the exterior. There was nothing to find fault

with the same gentleman, so as the affair was altogether exceptional, perhaps the marriage may be an exceptionally happy one."

Next day brought a letter from Mrs. Cope, so bitter, harsh and unfeeling, that it went far to excuse Florence's rash act in the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Wistart. In conclusion, the letter announced that Mrs. Cope had ordered my boxes to be sent to Hillside; and as Miss Mostyn probably knew—what I do not know and never wish to know—the present address of my ungrateful and disobedient child, I have directed everything belonging to her to be packed and forwarded with them."

As soon as I could reasonably expect it I had written to Florence, and she had replied, and described the change from the dull gloom of English winter to the flowers and sunshine of the South, as the counterpart of the change from the loveless harshness of her parents to Arthur's unceasing devotion. I showed the happy letter, brimming over with more than honeymoon enthusiasm, in triumph to Aunt Martha, who only shook her head with the staggering incredulity of forty years, and said, "Early days, my dear."

From this time the Balfours were pretty constantly moving, changing their residence with the changing seasons, till their case a long silence, and as my last letter had not been answered, I did not know where to send another. I regretted this the more, because I saw in the Times the announcement of Mr. Cope's sudden death from a railway accident, and I knew how great a shock this would give Florence, and how she would regret not having received his forgiveness. It must have been nearly a year after this event that I had a hurried note from her dated, to my surprise, from Birch Hall, Yorkshire, and saying that Mr. Balfour had decided on spending the winter in England, and she hoped I would at once pay her a long visit, as when they left home in the spring their return would be very uncertain.

The fog and chill of late October did not make a journey to the North of England a very inviting prospect, but I was too happy to think of seeing Florence again, and to care about externalities. I was full of curiosity to see her home, and how she would play her part as its mistress. I had been brought up in an old-fashioned way, to know a great deal more about domestic affairs than is usual to young ladies now-a-days, and my thoughts took a very practical turn, for I caught myself sincerely hoping she had good servants, and I fancied a world of pretty much in her hands, owing to her youth and utter inexperience. But though I did not expect to find an immense amount of good management in her household, I had no doubt that there would be plenty of the "love that sweetens sugarless tea."

Meditating thus, and looking forward to a joyful meeting with Florence, and the pretty enthusiasm with which she would take me over her house and grounds, the journey through the chill autumn weather did not seem long or dull, though my only companion was my brother Sydney, whose stock of conversation was of a limited and somewhat monotonous character. He left me at the station with manifest reluctance, proceeding less from fraternal affection than from an intense desire to drive the very point in the pretty little carriage which had been sent for me. However, a return ticket and his guardian's commands were imperative, and I was committed to the guidance of a youth in a neat livery, whose small figure and withered face involuntarily reminded me of a jockey.

Beech Hall was a modernized, old-fashioned house, looking comfortable and substantial, though not at all picturesque. A wing had been added, apparently within the last century, but the rest of the house was after the style and period of Gibbons.

"Do not announce me," I said to the servant who took my card. "Mr. Balfour expects me. If she is at home and alone, show me to her."

The man obeyed, and I followed him to a room on the ground floor, whose half-open door allowed me to have the long, unobscured first look at Florence which I wanted.

If the change in her from the time of our parting at Fern Bank to our meeting at Kensington had been great, how much sadder and stranger was the change in her now!

She sat before a writing-desk, but the hand which held the pen lay idle beside her, and the other wearily supported her head. Her figure had become thin, as the black dress she still wore showed with painful distinctness. Her face had lost its delicate bloom, and its sharpened outline was more clearly defined by the altered arrangement of her lovely luxuriant hair, which no longer fell round it in curls, but was drawn up into a high coronet of plaits; her expression was thoughtful, even to gravity; and the rosy-brown mouth, that I remembered so ready for smiles, had settled into lines of quiet sorrow.

I gazed at her till my eyes filled with tears, but her name involuntarily escaped from my lips.

She started to her feet, a radiant color mounted to her cheeks, and her smile made her look again like my Florence of old, but she put her hand to her side and did not attempt to join me. I sprang toward her, and her arms were instantly clasped round my neck, with the old frank exuberance of her love.

"Don't think this a cold welcome, Alice," she said at last. "I have not been strong lately, and I waited to get better before I sent for you, but any sudden emotion is still too much for me."

"I am so sorry to see you looking ill, my darling."

"I have had a great deal of trouble during the last year. You heard of poor papa's death, of course? That decided our return to England; and at Mr. Balfour's desire we went to Kensington, though I felt sure it would not be of the slightest use. Of course mamma refused to admit us; she is not softened in the least toward me. And then Mr. Balfour called on papa's old friends, and against my wishes, and how do you think papa's fortune was left, Alice?"

"I cannot possibly guess."

"To mamma for her life!—and then, every penny of it, to Mr. Malcolm!"

Grave though the subject was, we could neither of us suppress a smile.

"So you see he has got what he wanted after all, and prosperity is rewarded according to the manner of this world. Mr. Balfour could scarcely believe it at first, he had felt so certain that, being the only child, they would forgive me when it was no longer of any use to be angry."

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with as to order and convenience, but an utter want of the pretty tasteless trifles with which a woman is sure to surround herself where a home is loved as well as lived in, and whose absence so clearly indicates either a preoccupied and sorrowful heart or a very straitened purse."

Then I entered the drawing-room. Florence was sitting on a low couch, slowly turning over the pages of a magazine, and she looked up with a smile, making room for me by her side. In her evening dress of black silk her altered appearance was very noticeable, but I was compelled to own that her beauty had gained in interest and refinement what it had lost in lustre. The new arrangement of her hair displayed the graceful shape and pose of her head, and its bright blue seemed heightened by her complexion. By a corresponding change the gentle dignity of her manner compensated for the old animation; and but that both manner and appearance indicated ill health, I should soon have been reconciled to the transformation.

Mr. Balfour, who was chatting with a friend in a large bay window which overlooked a gloomy tree shaded lawn at the back of the house, crossed the room to speak to me, and in him I found no change at all. He looked as handsome as ever, as cynical, as self-possessed, and his greeting was perfectly polite, without the slightest grain of cordiality or good will. I was sorry to find my old dislike and distrust of him, which had vanished under the warmth and earnestness of his manner at the time of his marriage, return in full force.

The evening passed pleasantly enough; Major Calville, the friend, was a lively, intelligent man, just returned from "doing penance" at Gib, and ready to be very well pleased at resuming the ordinary comforts and conveniences

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